

SRI Project No. 1666
USDA Contract No. 53-3198-0-55

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Members of the research team included:

Deborah Kogan, Technical Director
Catherine M. Casserly, Project Manager
Lee Anderson
Evelyn Hawkins
Fiona Kelley
Suzanne Kreutzer
Kevin Rogers
Choya Wilson

Final Report • July 1992

STUDY OF THE FOOD STAMP EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAM: OPERATIONS, FUNDING, AND COORDINATION

Executive Summary

Deborah Kogan, SPR, Technical Director
Fiona Kelley, SRI, Policy Analyst
Catherine M. Casserly, SRI, Project Manager
Evelyn Hawkins, SRI, Policy Analyst

Prepared for:

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Food and Nutrition Service
Office of Analysis and Evaluation
3101 Park Center Drive, Room 214
Alexandria, VA 22302

Project conducted by:

SRI International
333 Ravenswood Avenue
Menlo Park, CA 94025

Social Policy Research Associates (SPR)
200 Middlefield Road
Menlo Park, CA 94025

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Preface

The research team members wish to express our appreciation to the staff at the participating state and local Food Stamp agencies for their cooperation with the field research for this study. We also appreciate the assistance of our Project Officer at the Food and Nutrition Service--Barbara Fay Murphy--and the cooperation of Ellen Henigan, Supervisor of the Work Programs Section of the Food Stamp Program at FNS.

GLOSSARY

ABE:	Adult Basic Education
AFDC:	Aid to Families with Dependent Children
CBO:	Community-Based Organization
CWEP:	Community Work Experience Program
DOL:	Department of Labor
E&T:	Food Stamp Employment and Training Program
EDP:	Employability Development Plan
ES:	Employment Service
ESL:	English as a Second Language
FNS:	Food and Nutrition Service
FSA:	Food Stamp Agency
FSP:	Food Stamp Program
FY:	Fiscal Year
GA:	General Assistance
GED:	General Educational Development (Certification)
JOBS:	Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training
JTPA:	Job Training Partnership Act
NOAA:	Notice of Adverse Action
NPA:	Non-Public Assistance
OJT:	On-the-Job Training
UI:	Unemployment Insurance
Note:	In this report we depart somewhat from FNS usage, which, for the purpose of computing state performance on the federal participation rate standard, refers to "E&T placements" as the sum of placements into E&T service components and notices of adverse action (NOAAs) issued. We refer to "E&T service placements" as reported placements in service components, <i>excluding</i> NOAAs, and describe NOAAs as a separate phenomenon.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

STUDY OBJECTIVES

The Food Stamp program has always emphasized the responsibility of Food Stamp recipients to register for work and accept available employment. Since the implementation of the Food Stamp Employment and Training (E&T) Program in 1987, states have been required to provide one or more of the following employment and training services to work registrants: job search, job search training, workfare, work experience, job training, and educational services. The goal of these E&T services is to increase the employability of program participants.

The goal of this study was to describe how local Food Stamp E&T programs are organized, designed, and operated. The study focused on what factors influenced state and local policymakers in their program design decisions and how these decisions affected:

- The clients targeted for participation in E&T services.
- The range of services provided.
- How clients are matched to and sequenced through particular services.
- How the administration of the Food Stamp E&T program is integrated with the operation of other work programs for public assistance recipients.
- The extent to which E&T services are coordinated with other employment and training services and funding streams available in the local community.

The research effort examined how different factors influenced the ability of local Food Stamp E&T programs to address the employability barriers faced by program participants. Conclusions and recommendations of the study suggest how federal, state, and local program administrators might

amend E&T policies, procedures, and services to further employability development objectives and improve employment outcomes for program participants.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sample Selection

Case studies of 15 representative but diverse local E&T programs were conducted to examine how different factors influence the Food Stamp Employment and Training Program's operation at the local level. It was essential that the sites selected be typical yet reflect the national variation in policy, operational, and economic contexts. Stratified random sampling provided variation on the context within which the local Food Stamp E&T programs operate and on the broad features of the E&T service designs selected at the state or local level. A two-stage sample selection process was used to take advantage of the distinction between variables measured at the state and local levels, with probability of selection proportional to program size at each stage.

State-level stratifying variables included:

- Whether the Food Stamp E&T program was state or locally administered.
- Whether the state offered an ongoing General Assistance (GA) program for employable individuals at the state level or in the most populous county.
- Whether the state plan for Food Stamp E&T services placed a high, medium, or low emphasis on job search or job search training components.

In addition, sample variation on several additional state-level factors was maintained through postselection review. These variables included the level of state fiscal E&T support, the percentage of all mandatory work registrants given exemptions from E&T participation, the percentage of all placements that were voluntary, and geographic region.

One local site was selected from each sample state, using two county-level stratification variables:

- Whether the local site had high, medium, or low unemployment.
- Whether the local site was characterized by high, medium, or low urbanization.

Variations in the Final Sample

As shown in Table 1, the sample resulting from this stratified selection procedure consisted of 6 county-administered and 9 state-administered E&T programs, including 7 sites with ongoing GA benefits for employable individuals and 8 sites without. Eight sample counties were highly urbanized, 4 were of medium urbanicity, and 3 were largely rural in character. Four sample sites had unemployment rates at or below 5%. Another 4 sample sites had moderate unemployment rates--between 5% and 8%. Seven sample sites had unemployment rates in excess of 8% during FY 91, which reduced the likelihood that Food Stamp E&T participants would find work.

Sites also varied as follows:

- The proportion of the county population receiving Food Stamps in the sample sites ranged from 2% to 21%.
- AFDC/SSI recipients ranged from 26% to 90% of the Food Stamp recipient caseloads in the sample sites.
- Sites varied in how E&T participants were perceived:
 - In 7 sites, E&T participants were characterized as generally job ready.
 - Five of the sample sites emphasized the serious employment barriers facing many Food Stamp E&T participants, including homelessness, mental disabilities, and long-term patterns of dependency.
 - The remaining 3 sites emphasized that the E&T work registrant pool was not homogeneous but included both less-job-ready and more-job-ready individuals.

Table 1

LOCAL SITES BY VARIABLES USED IN SAMPLE STRATIFICATION

Local Site	Level of Administration		Ongoing GA Program for Employables*		Emphasis on Job Search or Job Search Training			Urbanization			Extent of Unemployment		
	State	Local	Yes	No	High	Medium	Low	High	Medium	Low	High	Medium	Low
Allegheny County, PA	X		X				X	X					X
Caddo Parish, LA	X			X		X			X		X		
Campbell County, TN	X			X	X					X	X		
Galveston County, TX	X			X		X		X			X		
Hinds County, MS	X			X			X		X			X	
Hudson County, NJ		X	X		X			X				X	
↳ Jefferson County, CO		X		X	X			X					X
Kootenai County, ID	X			X	X					X		X	
McCurtain County, OK	X			X	X					X	X		
Merced County, CA		X	X		X				X		X		
Montgomery County, OH		X	X				X	X				X	
Norfolk City, VA		X		X	X			X				X	
Suffolk County, NY		X	X			X		X					X
Wayne County, MI	X		X				X	X			X		
Woodbury County, IA	X		X				X		X				X

* Although the initial stratification was based on the existence of a GA program statewide or in the most populous county, the variable as displayed in this table indicates whether a GA program existed in the sample county.

Case Study Methods

Site visits to each of the sample sites lasted 4 to 8 days and included reviews of existing documents and discussions with state-level program administrators, local administrators, E&T program operations staff, service providers, and representatives of other local employment and training services. Observations of ongoing E&T services were integrated into the site visit schedule. In addition, 5 to 10 randomly selected client files were reviewed at each local site to document how clients were assessed and matched to services, how program participation and outcomes were documented, and how typical clients were sequenced through the available services over time.

Within-site analysis included the preparation of a comprehensive site narrative summarizing the details of the E&T program design and operation in each of the study sites. Cross-site analysis included the development of descriptive typologies to compare and contrast different client targeting, program design, and coordination strategies used by program managers to further E&T program goals under varying local conditions.

CONTENT OF E&T SERVICES

Table 2 summarizes the relative frequency of E&T placements in job search, job search training, education and vocational training, and work experience components across the study sites.

Job Search

All sites offered one or more job search components. In 7 sites, the largest job search component was operated in-house by local welfare agency staff. Of the remaining 8 sites, 4 contracted with the Employment Service for the administration of job search, 1 contracted with the local JTPA agency, and 3 contracted with other local agencies.

Table 2
SERVICE FREQUENCY
(Percentage of All FY 91 Service Placements)

	Job Search	Job Search Training	Education/ Vocational Training	Work Experience	Other *
SITES IN GROUP 1: JOB SEARCH EMPHASIZED					
A	100	--	--	--	--
B	94	<1	5	1	--
C	96	--	4	--	--
D**	54	--	46	--	--
E	91	--	10	--	--
F	85	12	3	--	--
G	94	4	2	--	--
SITES IN GROUP 2: JOB SEARCH TRAINING EMPHASIZED					
H	26	64	6	4	--
I	35	62	2	--	--
J	6	79	15	--	--
J**	3	37	61	--	--
K	37	54	--	8	--
L	44	39	17	1	--
SITES IN GROUP 3: EDUCATION AND VOCATION TRAINING EMPHASIZED					
M	63	2	34	<1	--
N	12	11	55	9	14
O	13	27	57	3	--

* One state received FNS approval to report employability development planning as a separate E&T service component. Another state included assessment as a separate component in the state plan (provided to a small number of participants through referral to the JTPA system), but did not report placements to this component separately in the statistical report we obtained.

** Service mix after "data tape matches" with JTPA were added. In two study states, the mix of E&T service placements reported to FNS included Food Stamp recipients participating in the JTPA system who were identified through data tape matches. For these sites the service mix is presented twice in this table; without and with the additional placements identified through the data tape matches. In assigning sites to a category we have used the service mix prior to the addition of the placements identified through matching data tapes.

Note: Rows may not total to 100 because of rounding.

Study sites used two different approaches to the design of job search components:

- Eleven of the sites operated job search components that emphasized procedural requirements for completing a prescribed number of employer contacts to maintain Food Stamp eligibility.
- Four sites emphasized effective job search methods with a goal of actually securing employment. Each of these sites provided substantial guidance during the job search phase or targeted job search services to job-ready clients.

Job Search Training

Some form of preemployment training, job readiness training, or job search training was available to E&T participants in 10 of the 15 study sites. Two sites operated job search training directly, within the welfare agency. The remaining sites contracted with other organizations for the provision of job search training.

- Five sites emphasized the provision of job search training to all E&T participants, as the first E&T service component for most participants.
- In the remaining 5 sites that offered this service, job search training was targeted to specific subgroups or those who failed to locate employment after an initial job search.

In 3 sites, job search training was narrowly focused on the mechanics of job search (e.g., developing job leads, making employer contacts, preparing resumes, completing job applications, and conducting job interviews). In 7 sites, job search training workshops covered a wider range of topics, including career exploration, labor market information, life skills, and skills related to successful job performance.

Education and Training

Education and/or vocational training activities were included in the E&T service plans in 13 of the 15 sample sites. However, in 10 sites, education and training services accounted for less than 10% of all service placements.

In most sites, education and training services were provided through referral to local programs available to the general public; services were not designed specifically for E&T participants.

- All 13 sites used nonfinancial coordination linkages to enable E&T participants to gain access to education and training services available in the local community.
- Two sites also used E&T program funds to purchase training for some E&T clients. In several instances, these services were designed specifically for public assistance recipients. These sites provided education and training services to a substantial proportion of all E&T participants.

Educational services available through the E&T program usually included adult basic education, GED preparation, and English as a second language instruction. Vocational training services most often consisted of referrals to the local JTPA system.

Work Experience

Unpaid community work experience (CWEP) was an E&T service component in 6 study sites. One of these sites also offered paid work experience through the Food Stamp E&T program as a 100% state-funded component for Food Stamp work registrants who also received local General Assistance benefits.

Placements into E&T work experience components accounted for only a small percentage of all E&T service placements, ranging from 1% to 8%. Use of work experience components appears to be declining, at least partly in response to an increasing state-level emphasis on education for Food Stamp E&T work registrants.

The content of work experience assignments varied in its value for improving client employability: job assignments ranged from unskilled menial tasks to general office help to training in specific occupational skills in demand in the local labor market.

Reimbursement of Participant Expenses

Twelve of the 15 study sites offered up to \$160 per month per child for reimbursement of dependent care costs for participants in E&T services. In 3 sites where dependent care reimbursements were not available, individuals were excused from E&T participation if they needed dependent care. Overall, the demand for dependent care reimbursements was low.

All 15 sites reimbursed E&T participants for transportation expenses. Five sites explicitly included other costs incurred by participants (e.g., tuition, books, work clothes, tools) in the supportive services allowances provided to E&T participants. In 13 of the 15 study sites, participant reimbursements for transportation and other costs did not exceed \$25 per month. In the remaining 2 sites, costs in excess of \$25 per month were paid out of 100% state funds.

Transportation allowances were paid using two different methods. Nine sites limited reimbursements for transportation and other costs to documented or estimated actual costs. In the remaining 6 sites, transportation allowances were paid as fixed allowances, either at the beginning of participation in a component or at the completion of each month of participation.

CLIENT FLOW AND PARTICIPATION PATTERNS

Work Registration and Referral to E&T Services

Work registration occurred during the Food Stamp application or recertification interview with the Food Stamp intake/eligibility worker at all 15 study sites. However, individual exemptions were determined by intake/income maintenance workers at only 8 sites. In 7 sites, individual E&T exemptions were determined after referral to the E&T program. States varied in the number of exemption criteria used, and sites varied in how individual exemption criteria were interpreted. Most sites that granted an individual exemption did so for the full 12-month Food Stamp certification

period, but several sites monitored the status of exempted individuals every 60 days. Three sites granted temporary deferrals if participation was feasible within 30 days.

After determining mandatory work registration status, eligibility workers referred individuals to E&T service units or service contractors. Twelve sites informed E&T service providers about referrals by sending automated or hard-copy reports. Three sites expedited enrollment by hand-delivering referral forms to the E&T program staff.

Orientation, Assessment, and Assignment to Services

In most sites, orientation, assessment, and service planning were not considered separate E&T service components but were part of E&T intake and enrollment.

Attendance at an orientation session was the first required program activity in most sites and typically occurred 1 to 4 weeks after referral to the E&T program. Group orientations were provided in sites with large numbers of E&T participants and/or standardized service sequencing. Individual orientation sessions were used by some sites with individualized service planning; other sites used a combination of group and individual intake sessions to reduce costs. Not all sites provided a separate orientation: if an E&T program had only a single service component or a fixed sequence of services, the initial intake session was often combined with the start-up of the first service component.

Formal assessments were not widely used to document participants' employability and determine appropriate service assignments. Only 3 sites conducted formal assessments of basic skills and occupational aptitudes for all E&T participants. Six additional sites provided formal assessments to participants assigned to specific service components. Sites with formal assessment procedures tended to provide more substantial job search assistance, job search training, or education and vocational training services. Sites that did not assess participant status tended to emphasize procedural compliance with requirements for self-directed job search.

Service assignment procedures followed three different patterns:

- Four of the 15 study sites developed individualized service assignments for E&T participants.
- Seven sites placed the majority of participants into job search or job search training as their initial E&T service assignment, but allowed participants to select education or training as the

first activity if they so desired.

- Four sites had a standardized service sequence, which required completion of an individual job search before assignment to another component. In two of the sites, education or vocational training was available for participants who requested these services, but only after the completion of job search.

Sites with individualized service assignment procedures were more likely to emphasize the use of education and vocational training services. They also designed job search training components that were oriented to less-job-ready clients. Sites with standardized service planning procedures tended to emphasize immediate job placement even if many E&T participants had substantial barriers to employment.

Client Tracking and Noncompliance Procedures

Client progress was tracked primarily to report service placements and monitor compliance with E&T participation requirements. Client tracking was relatively straightforward when services were operated directly by the E&T program unit. Where E&T services were provided by another agency, participant tracking was more problematic. The degree of client tracking varied greatly:

- In some sites, case tracking procedures were extensive for participants in E&T services operated in-house or through financial contracts as well as for participants in services provided through nonfinancial referrals to outside providers.

- In other sites, clients were not tracked beyond referral and

For noncompliance with E&T participation requirements, E&T workers notified Food Stamp eligibility workers, who were responsible for issuing notices of adverse action and initiating sanctions. As required by federal regulations, all study sites allowed E&T clients to cure sanctions during the 2-month period of disqualification by indicating a willingness to comply with program requirements and commencing a required activity. The requirements to cure a sanction were rather easy to meet in most sites.

Initial failure to attend E&T orientation/intake sessions was widespread across the study sites, with no-show rates of 35% to 60% in many sites. High rates of noncompliance and frequency of cures caused many E&T staff to spend up to 50% of their time completing the paperwork associated with reporting noncompliance or curing sanctions.

PROGRAM DESIGN DECISIONS

State and Local Roles in E&T Program Design

In the majority of study sites, the decisions that shaped local E&T service designs and operations were made primarily at the state level. In other sites, local agency staff made key decisions or decisions were shared among state and local policymakers.

- In most of the study sites, states played the dominant role in E&T program design.
 - State policymakers were most influential in determining the content and service delivery arrangements for E&T services funded directly from the E&T budget. Even in some county-administered systems, states exercised strong design control by developing detailed E&T program plans and budgets.
 - Local policymakers usually were responsible for developing nonfinancial referral linkages to existing local programs for the delivery of education and vocational training services.
- State policymakers were particularly influential in the design and sequencing of E&T services in 9 of the 15 sites. Six of these sites were state administered and 3 were locally administered.

- In 6 sites, the local agency staff also had substantial design influence on the services provided with E&T program funds. Three of these sites were state administered and 3 were locally administered.

In the sites with local design discretion, local decision-makers influenced the content of individual services, the sequencing of services, and/or the procedures for assigning participants to specific services. The sites in which local policymakers played a strong design role more often addressed the service needs of participants with barriers to employment.

Funding Decisions

State legislators and administrators also determined how much state funding to contribute to E&T program operations beyond the 100% federal formula funds.

- Four study states did not contribute any state dollars to the operating costs of the E&T program.
- Seven study states contributed a moderate level of state funds, increasing the total program funds by 10% to 90% over the formula funding level after the federal match.
- Four study states contributed a significant level of state funds, increasing the total program funds by 160% to 650% over the formula funding level after the federal match.

States that contributed substantially to the cost of E&T operations spent, on average, about \$100 more per service placement than did states with moderate fiscal contributions. Study sites in states with substantial fiscal contributions also were more likely to provide individualized service planning and emphasize the use of education and vocational training components for E&T participants. However, the increased intensity of E&T services in these sites depended, in large part, on effective use of nonfinancial coordination linkages rather than on the direct provision or purchase of E&T services.

Only 2 of the study states required local sites to make contributions toward E&T program expenditures. In one case, the county was required to

contribute 50% of the nonfederal matched funds; in the other case, the county was required to contribute 20% of the nonfederal matched funds. Both sites were in states in which the E&T program is locally administered.

State and Local Perspectives on E&T Goals and Objectives

State and local perspectives on the goals and objectives of the Food Stamp E&T program constituted another major influence on program design decisions. Most state and local decision-makers perceived multiple goals for the Food Stamp E&T program. Among these were:

- *Fulfilling federal procedural requirements*--e.g., operating at least one E&T component, providing the required participant reimbursements, achieving the 50% participation rate performance standard, and issuing notices of adverse action (NOAAs) and implementing sanctions as required for noncompliance.
- *Promoting immediate employment for job-ready work registrants*, to prevent or shorten the duration of their stay on Food Stamps and to satisfy taxpayers that public-assistance cost containment measures were being implemented.
- *Promoting longer-term employability development for less-job-ready work registrants*, to help them overcome employment barriers such as lack of basic skills and formal education credentials, lack of work experience, lack of job-seeking skills, or lack of specific occupational skills.

Given the limited resources available to the Food Stamp E&T program, most of the study states and local sites emphasized the first and second goals more than the third. Sites promoting immediate employment required all mandatory nonexempt work registrants to participate in a standardized set of E&T services including job search and/or job search training focused narrowly on job search techniques. These sites tended to have moderate levels of state fiscal contribution to the E&T program budget and low average expenditures per E&T service placement.

A smaller number of sites decided to emphasize all three goals. Sites that had the goal of improving participant employability targeted a smaller subset of work registrants for E&T participation, offered individualized service planning, and/or made use of some less intensive and some more

intensive services, depending on client needs. These sites tended to have high levels of state fiscal contribution to the E&T program and high average expenditures per E&T service placement.

Client Targeting

Three different mechanisms were used in the study states to target E&T services: categorical exemptions, individual exemptions, and selective targeting within the nonexempt work registrant population.

- Planned categorical exemptions ranged from 0% to 65% of all work registrants in the study states. Categorical exemptions narrowed the client base by excluding counties with limited job opportunities, thus reserving program funds for geographic areas perceived to have the greatest potential for improving employment outcomes.
- Planned individual exemptions in the study states ranged from 0% to 24% of all work registrants. Individual exemptions eliminated work registrants whose circumstances made participating in the program impracticable--e.g., lack of transportation or dependent care or physical or mental incapacity. Thus, individual exemptions further targeted the E&T program to work registrants with the greatest labor market availability.
- Only 3 sites applied E&T participation requirements selectively to individuals in the mandatory nonexempt work registrant pool. Selective targeting within the mandatory work registrant pool allowed program operators to select specific groups they thought would be most likely to benefit from services. The targeted groups were varied: some were selected because they had multiple barriers to employment or were receiving substantial public assistance benefits, others because they were motivated to enroll in education or training programs, and still others because they were perceived as more likely to conduct a successful job search.

Sites that emphasized more intensive E&T services and employability development objectives tended to have low rates of categorical and individual exemptions. However, they were more likely to implement selective targeting of clients within the work registrant pool for participation in E&T services. Study sites with selective client targeting all offered GA benefits to employable individuals and attempted to match GA recipients and other less-job-ready clients to the most intensive service components--education, vocational training, or paid work experience.

Encouraging participation by volunteers is a fourth possible client targeting strategy that was not chosen in any of the 15 sample sites. Although 12 of the 15 sites permitted participation by volunteers, voluntary participants were enrolled infrequently and received only limited services.

Service Design Decisions

Sites placed different emphases on individual job search, job search training, or education and vocational training.

- Seven sites emphasized individual job search as the predominant E&T service. In these sites, job search accounted for more than 85% of all E&T service placements. These sites tended to devote low or moderate levels of state funding to E&T operating costs.
- Five study sites used job search training followed by job search as the predominant services. Low or moderate state fiscal contributions to E&T were also made in these sites.
- Three sites made a significant proportion of all service placements in education or vocational training components. In these sites, placements in education or training ranged from 34% to 57% of all service placements. All three sites contributed substantial state funds to E&T operating costs, although the actual cost of training in these sites was more often provided by nonfinancial coordination linkages than by direct E&T expenditures.
- Work experience was not used very frequently in any of the study sites visited, although it was emphasized in several state plans.

Sites that emphasized job search as the predominant E&T activity were less likely than other sites to use any formal client assessments at intake, and more likely to use standardized service sequences and job search designs that emphasized procedural compliance. At the other end of the continuum, sites that emphasized education and vocational training as the most frequently used E&T service component were more likely than other sites to use individualized service assignment procedures, offer substantial hands-on assistance on how to conduct an effective job search, target less-job-ready individuals for participation in job search training, and orient the content of job search training to those with employment barriers.

Service Delivery Arrangements

Three different overall designs were used for the administration and delivery of E&T services:

- Six sites directly operated all funded E&T activities and services within the local welfare agency. E&T operations were located in a separate work program unit or within another administrative unit. The E&T program in these sites tended to emphasize job search.
- Five sites contracted the operation of the entire E&T program to another agency or organization. Job search or job search training services were usually emphasized in these sites.
- Four sites administered intake, service assignment, and case management of services within the local welfare agency, but contracted with another agency or organization for the operation of some or all service components. This service delivery arrangement was used by most of the sites that emphasized employability development goals and emphasized the provision of education and vocational training services to E&T participants.

Consolidation with Other Public Assistance Work Programs

Consolidation with the JOBS Program for AFDC Recipients

The Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training (JOBS) program for recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) was operational in each of the 15 sample sites. Although consolidation of planning, policy, and administrative oversight of the JOBS and Food Stamp E&T programs occurred at both the state and local levels in a number of the study sites, this practice did not generally lead to consolidation of services or service delivery arrangements for JOBS and Food Stamp E&T participants. Barriers to consolidation included:

- Perceptions that the service needs and employment barriers of the clients of these two programs differed substantially.
- Dramatically different levels of funding available for the provision of services under JOBS and Food Stamp E&T.

- Different regulatory requirements for the two programs, particularly in the areas of required participation rates and sanctioning procedures for noncompliance.

Three sites consolidated E&T service delivery with the JOBS program. This design decision was strongly associated with the following factors: high levels of state fiscal contribution to E&T, individualized service planning, an emphasis on the delivery of educational and vocational training services, an emphasis on effective job search methods rather than mere procedural compliance, the development of strong nonfinancial coordination linkages with local education and training institutions, and the use of selective client targeting within the nonexempt work registrant pool.

Consolidation with Work Programs for GA Recipients

General Assistance (GA) payments were provided to employable individuals in 7 case study sites. Consolidation of GA work programs and the Food Stamp E&T program was selected by 3 states that had made a commitment to invest substantial state funds in E&T programming. By including GA/Food Stamp recipients as Food Stamp E&T participants, these states obtained not only 100% formula funds but also the 50% federal match for services to address some of the employability barriers faced by GA recipients. Each of these sites tried to match GA recipients to the more intensive E&T service components. (They were also the same 3 sites that consolidated E&T/JOBS operations.)

In contrast, in the 4 states with GA programs that offered less intensive Food Stamp E&T services, separate work programs were operated to supplement the available E&T services for GA recipients. Three sites required GA recipients to participate in both the Food Stamp E&T program and a state-administered or locally administered GA work program to gain more control over the GA caseload. One site exempted GA recipients from the Food Stamp E&T program as long as they were actively participating in the state's GA work program.

Coordination with Other Employment and Training Programs

The case study sites generally used E&T budget funds for the operation of job search, job search training, and work experience components, while using nonfinancial referral linkages with existing community services for the delivery of education and vocational training services to Food Stamp E&T participants.

Financial agreements for the purchase of services for E&T clients ranged from comprehensive contracts to a single organization for the administration of the entire E&T program to specialized contracts with one or more organizations for the operation of a single E&T service component. Financial agreements were used for the operation of job search in 8 sites, for the provision of job search training in 8 sites, and for the delivery of vocational training in 2 sites. Agencies and organizations used as contractors included the Employment Service, local JTPA agencies, and a variety of other public and private organizations.

In addition, nonfinancial coordination linkages with other community resources were used in 13 of the 15 study sites to expand the range of services available to E&T participants.

- Ten sites used the public school system--high schools, adult schools, or community colleges--to enroll E&T participants in adult basic education (ABE), general educational development (GED), or English as a second language (ESL) classes.
- The local Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) system was used to provide several different types of services to E&T clients, including:
 - Vocational training services in 10 sites.
 - Educational services in 3 sites.
 - Job development/job placement/job search services in 2 sites.
- Two sites used the Employment Service for job placement services.
- Two sites used the local mental health agency for mental health or drug/alcohol counseling.

- Two sites used the local office of the state vocational rehabilitation agency for assessment and the provision of vocational rehabilitation services.
- One site used community-based organizations for literacy training.

Coordination linkages were well developed and accounted for a substantial percentage of service placements in 5 sites. However, in 10 sites, coordination linkages were not widely used. Barriers to the more widespread utilization of existing community resources for E&T clients included:

- *Incomplete information to E&T staff and participants.* Some E&T staff were not well versed on the available training classes and thus did not emphasize the education and vocational training options during E&T orientation sessions.
- *Dependence on client initiative.* Because referrals to education and training were not emphasized at most sites and E&T staff did not directly intervene with the referral agency in most cases, clients had to show substantial initiative to follow up on a referral to an education or training provider and enroll in an available course.
- *JTPA client priorities.* JTPA-funded service providers were often reluctant to enroll large numbers of E&T participants in vocational training because they were seen as too high risk or, alternatively, as not needy enough to qualify for JTPA priority target groups.
- *Lack of case management/tracking procedures.* E&T staff in many sites were unable to provide effective case management services or to track E&T clients participating in education or vocational training programs.
- *Service sequencing.* Local E&T programs often required participation in job search, job search training, or work experience before participation in education or vocational training components.

Summary of Factors Influencing E&T Design Decisions

The two factors with the greatest influence on E&T design decisions were limited program funding and the federal 50% participation rate standard in effect during FY 91. By itself, the low level of E&T funding made it difficult to provide intensive services to E&T participants, unless a site

developed particularly strong nonfinancial coordination linkages. Limited funding in combination with the 50% participation rate standard discouraged client targeting and caused many program managers to design relatively "thin" services for large numbers of E&T participants.

Overall, the level of urbanization and local unemployment had relatively little influence on E&T design decisions. This lack of influence was due, at least in part, to the fact that many decisions were made at the state level rather than tailored to fit specific local contexts. The 3 study sites with the greatest emphasis on education and vocational training services were metropolitan counties that took advantage of their particularly rich service environments to develop intensive training opportunities for E&T participants. On the other hand, a number of other highly urbanized sites had E&T designs that emphasized immediate employment through individual job search activities.

Similarly, the fact of state versus county administration did not appear to be a major influence on E&T design decisions. However, the extent of local participation in E&T design decisions was important. Sites with a strong local role in E&T design were more likely to develop individualized service plans and to develop effective nonfinancial coordination linkages with a variety of local educational and training institutions for the provision of intensive services to E&T participants.

The perceived job readiness of E&T participants was also influential. Six of the 8 sites that emphasized immediate employment perceived most of their nonexempt work registrants to be job ready, while only 1 of the 6 sites that emphasized employability development perceived most work registrants as job ready.

In addition, sites with E&T programs that emphasized the provision of education and vocational training services tended to have GA programs for employable individuals with no separate GA work program, make high state fiscal contributions to E&T operating costs, and spend slightly more per service placement than other sites. These sites also retained strong welfare

agency control of E&T services by administering the overall program in-house, while contracting with one or more agencies for service delivery. Other factors associated with the delivery of more intensive E&T services included the use of E&T funds to purchase some vocational training services, the development of strong nonfinancial coordination linkages for both education and vocational training service delivery, the use of selective client targeting to reach subgroups within the nonexempt work registrant pool, and the consolidation of E&T services with the JOBS program for AFDC recipients.

PROGRAM REPORTING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The information systems used to maintain data on E&T work registrants and participants were developed to serve important functions in the day-to-day operation of public assistance programs. The ability to generate summary statistics was a secondary consideration. Consequently, management report formats were usually set up to provide only the information called for by the current federal reporting requirements. As a result:

- The capacity to summarize or generate reports on client characteristics and outcomes was limited.
- Automated E&T information systems were generally separate from the eligibility/benefits management information systems. This fact made it more difficult for E&T staff to track client outcomes.

In 9 sites, E&T data were managed at the local site level and reported to the state in hard-copy aggregate-level summary form. In the remaining 6 sites, E&T data were maintained in statewide client-level databases. States with consolidated Food Stamp E&T and JOBS programs sometimes had difficulty producing separate reports on the services received by Food Stamp E&T participants.

Implementation of outcome-based performance standards for the E&T program was initially published for discussion in August 1991. Subsequently, implementation was delayed until one year after (1995-96) the publication of final outcome-based performance standards by the Department of Health and

Human Services so that the two systems can be coordinated. The shift from participation rate standards to outcome-based performance standards, currently planned for implementation in FY 94 or FY 95, will require expanded documentation of client outcomes, the ability to maintain an unduplicated count of participation, and the ability to document and adjust for variations in client characteristics and local labor markets. Relatively few states currently have the capacity to collect, compile, and report the required data items. Development of the capacity to collect and analyze the data necessary for outcome-based standards will require a significant infusion of resources and staff time in most sites.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Several recent changes in the federal legislative and regulatory context for the E&T program have emphasized a new interest in encouraging states to serve individuals with substantial barriers to employment and provide more intensive E&T services. These changes include substantial reductions in the federal participation rate performance standard starting in FY 1992, plans to coordinate the design of outcome-based performance standards for E&T and the JOBS program, and announcement of a demonstration program to test conformance of JOBS and E&T regulations in up to 60 local project areas, starting in FY 1993.

While these changes in the Food Stamp E&T policy context have provided individual states with new flexibility, strong national leadership will be necessary to provide a catalyst for changing the orientation of the Food Stamp E&T program on a nationwide basis. Federal leadership could take a variety of forms, including:

- Increasing the funding level for the Food Stamp E&T program as a separate and distinct program.
- Disseminating information about the different E&T program designs currently in use, particularly those designs that offer more intensive services to individuals with significant barriers to employment.

- Supporting national efforts to consolidate and coordinate delivery of services now separately administered by a number of different programs, including JOBS, JTPA, and the Food Stamp E&T program.

Meanwhile, a number of individual states and Food Stamp agencies may be interested in taking advantage of the reduced participation rate performance standard to redesign E&T services. Based on our study findings, we have identified alternative strategies that state and local administrators could use to further the employability development objectives of the Food Stamp E&T Program. These strategies include:

- Redesigning individual service components to provide meaningful services to E&T participants.
- Implementing selective client targeting rather than universal participation requirements.
- Matching individual clients to appropriate services, including assigning individuals with employment barriers to more intensive services.
- Strengthening service consolidation and service coordination linkages.
- Enhancing data collection and accountability procedures to document the completion of planned services and the achievement of employment outcomes by E&T participants.

Redesigning Individual Service Components

We recommend that state and local administrators interested in redesigning their E&T programs offer participants more substantive assistance in conducting effective job searches rather than merely monitoring individual job search contacts. Not all E&T participants need detailed instruction in job search methods. However, at a relatively low cost, even job-ready clients could be offered access to a review of effective job search techniques (e.g., through brief group sessions). Job clubs and peer support groups are other low-cost organizational structures that could be used to provide ongoing support during job search to individuals needing more intensive services. In addition local E&T programs could refer individual clients to job search services available from the Employment Service, JTPA, and community-based organizations.

Implementing Selective Client Targeting

~~While not necessarily a desirable goal in itself selective client~~

targeting is a logical response to the funding constraints of the E&T program. Given funding limitations, selective client targeting enabled some states and local program administrators in the study to design programs that offered more intensive services to smaller numbers of participants, rather than spreading the available funding thinly over as many participants as possible. Thus, we recommend that states interested in redesigning E&T services consider selective client targeting as a strategy to focus limited E&T resources on specific target groups.

Matching Individuals to Appropriate Services

As states and local E&T programs diversify their service offerings, with some services designed for individuals with more serious employment barriers and other services designed to provide substantive job search assistance to more job-ready clients, matching individuals to appropriate services will take on increased importance. Given limited program funding, individual service planning is necessary to conserve the most intensive services for individuals who need these services and can benefit from them.

Strengthening Service Consolidation and Coordination Linkages

We recommend that states interested in developing a wider range of services for E&T participants consider consolidating work programs for public assistance clients, if doing so will increase the funding or range of services available to E&T participants. Even without fully consolidated programs, states and local sites may benefit from the joint operation of individual service components (e.g., job clubs) as consolidated services.

Nonfinancial coordination linkages were perhaps the most important factor that permitted some study sites to expand the range and intensity of services available to E&T clients. We recommend that other states and local programs follow this lead. To make education and vocational training

services more fully integrated options within the E&T service system, we recommend that E&T staff become familiar with the range of programs and services available in their local communities, inform E&T participants about these service options, and develop effective formal coordination agreements with these providers to facilitate the referral and enrollment of E&T clients in their programs.

Enhancing Accountability Procedures

As state administrators and local site managers begin to expand the range and intensity of services provided to E&T participants, they will be increasingly interested in how outcomes vary for different types of participants receiving different services. Additional information about program outcomes will also be necessary to generate the data for outcome-based performance standards. To prepare for outcome-based accountability systems and provide information on service effectiveness, we recommend that states and local sites begin to develop the capacity to document client progress as well as service and employment outcomes.

